

64 *The Gros Ventres of Montana: Part I, Social Life*

342 were sewn together with sinew. The women selected the poles
[484] for the lodge, as well as for the travois, and were responsible for erecting and taking down the lodge, for the arrangement of the interior, for the making of the travois, and for the packing and moving of impedimenta.

The foundation of three poles for the lodge was tied together and then raised as a unit. The other poles were arranged one by one, starting with those of the front. The cover of buffalo hides was tied to one pole, the "backbone," which was placed at the center-back, the cover then being drawn into place and fastened securely at the front, with small wooden pins usually made of cherry-tree wood. The ordinary Gros Ventre lodge stakes were shaped like a pin with a relatively small head. One informant, however, stated that this form of stake often came loose where the cover became taut with the wind, and that she had found the forked type, first observed by her many years ago when visiting another tribe to the south, far more satisfactory.

342 Old lodge covers were saved and cut up to make a sort of lining
353 at the bottom of the lodge in winter, and the snow scraped away to make place for the lodge was piled up on the outside thereof for extra warmth. In summer the ground inside the lodge was covered with willows, sagebrush or rye grass. Decorated robes as wind-breaks were sometimes suspended in the lodge behind the fancy backrests, which were made by the women from slender willow rods. The women gathered and peeled the rods, although the young men helped straighten them by pulling them through their teeth. A willow ring encircled the fireplace and a broom of buck-brush was always kept handy. Personal belongings were neatly disposed against the wall of the lodge and in front of these were placed the skins which served as bedding by night and as seats by day. The painted parfleches were given prominence to lend colorful touches. Dishes, utensils, and stored food were suspended
412 from poles well off the floor.

415 Among the articles of household equipment may be mentioned knives, both of bone and of metal, kettles, horn spoons, fleshing tools, etc., and food containers of various sorts. For the latter,
[237] the membrane protecting the heart of the buffalo, the paunch, the bladder, and the intestines of the buffalo, as well as those of the

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787 was given. Two such songs, victory songs, given during war raids, were recorded by us.

[187] A great many Gros Ventre men and women had power acquired by quest or otherwise from non-ancestral beings, but far fewer had ancestral helpers such as we are describing. Our informants, in fact, whose combined memories carried back to the early 1860's, could recall only five or at most six, seven or eight: Good Singer, Woman (or Bear Old Woman), Morning Star Appears (probably the same as Rising Cross), Bird Child, Bull Head, and perhaps two or three others.* Persons with ghost helpers had prestige, not greater however than outstanding doctors had.

[425] Power acquired from non-ancestral beings could be transferred by the possessor to another person through gift or sale. But a ghost helper was not transferable; such power was owned property; a ghost helper was not. A given person never had more than one ghost helper, so far as we could discover. In the shaking tent rite, only this one ghost helper had part,—no other being, neither the Supreme Being, nor Bha'a, nor Little Spirit,* nor any power-giving being.

At the time the ghost helper was accepted by its surviving relative, it promised him (or her) to come when summoned with the summoning song; but, in sharp contrast to the practice of non-ancestral power-bestowing beings, it imparted no power to him whatever, whether in war, medicine, gambling or love, except the "power," if it can be called such, to summon the ghost and except by sheer coincidence as in the case of Bad Bad Bull mentioned above. The ghost helper imparted not power, but knowledge; not any power of clairvoyance, prophecy or wisdom, but knowledge itself; not once and for all at the time of being accepted by the person, as did the power-bestowing beings but from time to time if and when summoned. The sole function of the ghost helper as

* Cf. Flannery, 1944, pp. 55-58; Cooper, 1944, pp. 62-77 passim. Rising Cross of Flannery, p. 56, was pretty surely the same person as Morning-Star-Appears or Morning-Star-Is-Up, of Cooper, p. 71; probably the same person as mentioned in Watches-All's narrative by Kroeber, 1908, pp. 216-17.

[114] * That Little Spirit could function in the shaking tent rite in place of an ancestral spirit, as stated reservedly by Cooper, 1940, p. 112, is an error, corrected by field data gotten by him later.

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778 Ventres, not many, had power. Males would start questing when
 787 young, but older men would also go out to seek power. After a
 man got to be really old, he no longer tried." Charles Buckman
 had heard old men say that they had fasted and prayed (on the
 hills) over and over again but that in spite of the sufferings they
 thus endured "they never had even a dream," and, in another chat,
 he remarked that "few fasted and prayed."

• [184] It seems, therefore, that many men did not go out on hills to
 seek power (women never did so), and that relatively few even
 of those who did go were successful. At least, very few were suc-
 cessful in acquiring really significant or great power. On the other
 hand, many, the majority perhaps of both men and women, had
 minor power or powers of one kind or another, gotten initially
 otherwise than by quest or by transfer. Thus for example, Coming
 Daylight, who had repeatedly refused curing powers offered her
 in dreams and who insisted she was in no sense a medicine woman
 or "holy," this is, power-possessing, woman, had certain herbal
 curatives, for family use, given her by her maternal grandmother
 and by her mother's sister, Good Singer, a noted medicine woman
 of earlier days. Or, to use just one other example, many women
 and men had bought love medicine from other men or women.
 These minor powers, of many different kinds not always dis-
 tinguishable from non-magical knowledge and ability, were ap-
 parently very common,—"the usual thing," as The Boy expressed
 it above, "for grown-ups, men and women."

THE POWER QUEST

787 The favorite time of the year for going out to seek war, wealth
 827 and doctor power was spring. In The Boy's words: "It was known
 to be easier to get doctor power in spring. Everybody used to say
 that the young bear cubs used to wash their feet with the first
 rain of the spring. Bears were easy to get power from in spring.
 They were eager to give their power at this season. All nature is
 alive in spring. Grass, trees and leaves wake up. Hibernating
 animals used to sing before coming out of their winter dens. Bears
 come out of their hibernating dens after the first rain of spring.
 The body of even a human being is sort of stationary in winter